

Document program hard to set up

There's a new way to print customized versions of frequently used documents. A program called JumpStart allows you to string together different text — as well as plug in data — every time you print a standard form.

JumpStart merges predrafted "boilerplate" segments created by a word processor. It doesn't replace your word processing program, but claims to supplement it by offering a better mail-merge function.

It offers more than other fill-in-the-blank merge programs, but has so many drawbacks that its audience is exceptionally limited. Some of its features are:

- Custom menu system. In the process of setting up all the options for a document, you create a menu system that reflects all possible choices. An inexperienced user can then just answer menu prompts to create a custom document.

- Ready-to-use forms. Five prepared forms are included: an apartment lease, bill of sale, pow-



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er of attorney, promissory note and transmittal letter.

The usual caveat of using legal documents with advice from a lawyer strongly applies.

- Pronoun replacement. Another cus-

tomizing tool is the blanket replacement of pronouns according to gender. If you were working on a will and started out with male gender the program will, when referring to spouse, shift over to using such words as "she," "her" or "wife."

- Automatic paragraph numbering. Paragraphs can be optionally numbered in outline or legal style.

JumpStart embellishes the process of boilerplate assembly by offering menu choices for each segment of a document. A person

preparing a lease can easily customize its conditions by merely making menu selections from successive screens.

The catch is that in order to use the menu interface, someone has to spend considerable time struggling with JumpStart's document assembly system beforehand.

It was during this process that I got bogged down. It's fortunate that JumpStart included several completed forms. Otherwise I wouldn't have even imagined the scope of the program.

But despite its scope, formidable procedures are necessary to generate custom forms. Just keeping track of the terminology in the manual is confusing.

JumpStart differs from other forms generators such as Blankity Blank! and FormWorx, which take a more static approach to documents, assuming the repeated use of fixed documents. They did, however, offer the feature of storing the data that was merged into fields in data-base form.

JumpStart, on the other hand, is

for users who shun standardized forms in favor of highly customized documents.

It also merges data with imbedded fields, but it doesn't combine data fields in a common, reusable data base.

The bottom line: A user who already understood a word-processing program and its mail-merge functions, could — with some effort — produce the same type of documents as JumpStart.

What JumpStart offers is an interface that allows a less experienced user to easily assemble documents — provided that someone with expertise first developed the background menu.

JumpStart is available from Probate Software Publishing Co. Inc., 3527 W. 12th St., Suite B, Greeley 80634, (303) 352-3445, for \$149.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity.